

ASU Suffers First SoCon Loss

Written by Mike Flynn
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A 5-for-5 performance by Daniel Kassouf (Lexington, N.C./North Davidson) was not enough to overcome three crucial errors and seven walks in Appalachian State University baseball's 10-8 loss to Elon on Friday evening at Latham Park. Appalachian (17-4, 6-1 SoCon) suffered its first Southern Conference setback of the season and fell

for only the second time in its last 17 games. Buoyed by Kassouf's RBI double, RBI single and mammoth solo home run in his first three at-bats, the ballgame was knotted at 4-4 after five-and-a-half innings. However, the Mountaineers broke down defensively over the final three stanzas, committing three errors, issuing four walks and hitting a batter to allow Elon (13-10, 7-3 SoCon) to score its last six runs with the benefit of just three hits. Only three of the Phoenix's final six runs were earned.

Despite the late-game struggles in the field, Appalachian continued to battle at the plate. The Mountaineers scored three runs in the top of the eighth inning to cut a 9-4 deficit to 9-7. After their third error of the evening led to another unearned run in the bottom of the eighth, the Apps rallied to bring the trying run to the dish in the top of the ninth before the Phoenix ultimately sealed its ninth-straight win in the series.

Kassouf finished with three singles, a double and his SoCon-leading ninth home run of the season in his 5-for-5, three-RBI, two-run effort. The senior designated hitter became the first Mountaineer with five hits in a game since Rand Smith went 5-for-7 in a 19-4 win at UNC Greensboro on May 9, 2009. Kassouf is also the first ASU player to go 5-for-5 since Isaac Harrow accomplished the feat in a 15-5 victory at Davidson on March 29, 2009. In the process, Kassouf moved to second in the SoCon with a gaudy .427 batting average.

Tyler Zupcic (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) and Tyler Tewell (Charlotte, N.C./Butler) added two hits apiece to help pace the Mountaineers' 12-hit attack. With his 2-for-5 showing, Zupcic extended his hitting streak to 14 games.

Appalachian southpaw Will Helms (Charlotte, N.C./Providence) was charged with two runs (one earned) in a third of an inning out of the bullpen to suffer the first loss of his career. The senior had won his first 11 collegiate decisions, which was good for the nation's second-longest active winning streak. No other active NCAA Division I pitcher had as many as seven career victories without a loss.

Niko Fraser paced Elon with three hits while Alex Swim drove in two runs for the Phoenix. Appalachian looks to rebound from its first conference defeat when it continues its three-game SoCon series at Elon on Saturday. First pitch is set for 4 p.m. at Latham Park.

NOTES: Despite the setback, Appalachian remains atop the SoCon standings, percentage points ahead of second-place College of Charleston (16-6, 8-2 SoCon) ... ASU fell one win shy of matching its best SoCon start ever — the 1978 Mountaineers won their first seven conference games ... continuing a season-long trend, Appalachian scored seven of its eight runs with two outs ... 66 of ASU's 152 RBI this season (43.4 percent) have come with two outs ... Elon's three-run fifth inning took nearly an hour-and-a-half, thanks to a 47-minute lightning delay ... most of the ninth inning was played in a steady downpour ... the Mountaineers surrendered double-digit runs for the first time since a 10-7 loss at College of Charleston on May 15 of last season ... Appalachian has not beaten Elon since a 26-10 triumph at Latham

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Park on May 1, 2008.

Photo Courtesy: Daniel Kassouf, ASU Athletics